SPEECH

BY

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Re-Engineering Education Conference
18th May, 2015
The Vice Chancellor, UMMA University-Prof Prof. Shaukat Abdulrazak;

Renowned International Scholar & Researcher - Dr. Sheila Parvyn-Wamahiu;

Visiting scholar from University of London - Dr Anil Khamis,

Prof Bosire Mwebi from Canada,

The Key note speakers for the various thematic areas,
Participants from the international community and those from Kenya

Good morning.
It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Kenyatta University for this important conference on ‘Re-engineering Education for sustainable development’. Allow me to start by recognizing the
presence of Chief Guest – Prof. Shaukat Abdulrazak who has found time to grace this occasion. We are honoured sir that you found time to officiate the opening of this international conference on Re-Engineering Education.

I would like to also welcome all the participants and assure you that you made the right choice to
attend this conference here at Kenyatta University. Over the years, Kenyatta University has continued to play a critical role in developing human capital that play a pivotal role in the country’s development agenda.

Critical need to re-engineer education for sustainable development
It is through education that mankind has been able to transmit values, knowledge and practices from one generation to another. In recent years, formal education has emerged as one of the strongest drivers of change in the society. Studies have consistently shown that education yields positive private and social rates of return. Consequently, education has
come to be viewed as an investment - the world over by both individuals and governments. In Kenya and in other countries as well, families spend a considerable amount of their income on the education of their children. At the national level, education takes the lion’s share of the national budget.
Research shows that those countries which have invested highly in the development of human capital through education have attained higher levels of growth and development compared to countries endowed with natural resources but with low human capital stocks. For example, Japan, Switzerland and Singapore are examples of countries which have reached
the developed country status despite a paucity of natural resources due to a high stock of human capital. On the other hand, many of the developing countries, and especially from Africa, are endowed with abundant natural resources but are still very far from attaining the standards of living of the developed countries. This can be attributed to the low human
capital stock of these countries. For a country to exploit the natural resources to its advantage, the right skills are a pre-requisite. Education plays a key role in the production of human capital with the desired skills in the socio-economic spheres.

Global education agenda
Due to the realization of the important role played by education in development, the global development agenda gave a lot of focus to education in the last two decades. This was borne of the realization by the global community that no country could attain high levels of growth and development without proper investment in the education of its people. Thus, the last two
decades saw the crafting of the Education for All (EFA) goals as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The two sets of goals set some targets that were to be attained by 2015. Education was a key focus with regard to the EFA goals while it also featured strongly in the MDGs. This conference, therefore, comes at a critical time when

developing countries and the global community are taking stock of both the EFA goals and MDGs. Whereas varying degrees of success have been realized by different countries with regard to the attainment of these goals, there is consensus that there is still much that requires to be done.

Challenges facing education:
In the last two decades, thanks to the global initiatives such as EFA and MDGs, as well as national initiatives by different countries, for example the Free Primary Education in Kenya, tremendous progress has been realized in expanding access to education. While this is good and commendable, we are cognizant of the fact that we cannot rest on the laurels of that success. The
education sector, especially in many developing nations is still beset by other challenges.

Quality and relevance are two of the key challenges facing the education sector that should be addressed in the post 2015 education agenda. It is worth noting that these two challenges permeate the entire education sector from basic education to
higher education. Low scores on quality and relevance of education means that the resultant output is lacking in the skills that could help the countries get into the trajectory of development. Globalization and advancements in ICT have led to an increased competition in the development arena and only those countries with the right stock of human capital will
remain ahead of the pack. Therefore, there is a need to focus on quality and relevance of the education given in the different countries while bearing in mind that we are in a competitive global labour market.

In a nutshell, for education to take its rightful role in the development of human capital which is critical for socio-
economic development, it has to seriously address the challenge of quality and relevance. However, for this to be done successfully there is need to re-engineer education for sustainable development. As the world population continues to grow, the natural resources continue to dwindle. Consequently, the development model that a country chooses
should be one that is sustainable. This calls for new ways of doing things, breaking from norms and traditions that are no longer tenable, a paradigm shift in the management of resources.

Thus, I am delighted by this conference as I feel it could not have come at a better time. As scholars, you have a critical role to play in informing and influencing educational policy. I
am confident that you will seriously interrogate how education can be re-engineered to enable our countries realize sustainable development.

With those remarks, it is now my pleasure to officially open the 2015 Re-engineering Education Conference.

Thank you.